

The Coming American Fascism

For at least two decades we have been living in a society that has taken on all the characteristics of fascism. At home we have the fascist corporate state economy: an economy of monopolies, subsidies, and privileges run by a tripartite coalition of Big Business, Big Unions, and Big Government; and we have a military garrison state, with permanent conscription, tied to a permanent war economy fueled by armament contracts. We have an effectively state-owned or at best state-run educational system, from lower to higher, imbuing its charges with the glories of our government and our system, and training them to become cogs in the military-industrial-bureaucratic complex we have become.

In foreign affairs we have expanded all over the globe, grabbing bases and running governments everywhere, all in the name of a global crusade against the “international Communist conspiracy.”

So far, then, we have duplicated fascism right across the board — except in one vital detail: We have not yet cracked down, except marginally, on freedom of speech and freedom of dissent in this country. But now the signs are ominously piling up that this particular and crucial aspect of freedom might be going down the statist drain. For the government is beginning what appears to be a massive crackdown on the growing anti-war movement — probably because it could tolerate this form of dissent only as long as it remained confined to the fringes of society. But now that the anti-war movement has been growing by leaps and bounds in numbers and in

militancy, in breadth and in depth; now the government seems to be getting ready to revive the repressions on dissent which were rampant in the early stages of the Cold War.

There are many indications of this crackdown, from General Hershey's threat to use the draft to punish opposition by anti-war students, to the army's conviction of two anti-war activists near Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, for "trespassing on government property." But three leading instances will suffice here. First, Walter Teague and Mike Gimbel, two officers of the U.S. Committee to Aid the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam, after being beaten by police during the anti-draft demonstrations in New York last December, were indicted for outrageously severe charges; such that Teague, if convicted, faces up to fifteen years in jail, while Gimbel, against whom the charge is mere *possession* of a bottle of explosive powder, faces up to seven years in prison!

Secondly, the militant black nationalist writer LeRoi Jones, arrested and accused of *possessing* two revolvers, was convicted for this alleged crime and condemned to three years in prison without possibility of probation. Even if the charge is not a frameup, why should *possession* of a weapon make one a criminal? Is it not everyone's property right, as well as his constitutional right, to bear arms? But neither liberty nor property are the concern of those out to savage LeRoi Jones, and their true motives are revealed in the judge's bothering to read aloud, when making his decision, from Jones' poems, which are hardly related to his possessing a weapon. So now judges are literary critics, too!

The third, and most noteworthy, crackdown is the Justice Department's decision to indict, for possible long jail sentences, on the charge of exercising freedom of speech — counseling people to resist the draft — several leading figures in the anti-war movement, including Dr. Benjamin Spock and Yale Chaplain Rev. William Sloan Coffin. But good may emerge from this move toward fascism's last stage. We might see the courts declare the draft unconstitutional, as it surely is under the 13th Amendment's outlawry of involuntary servitude. At any rate, I predict we are going to see the anti-war movement do the reverse of the early Cold War movement's folding up and quitting — this movement is much too principled and determined for that.